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LOUISA LEE SCHUYLER—AN APPRECIATION

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At the one hundred and sixty-first commencement of Columbia University for the second time only in the history of the institution the honorary degree of LL.D. was conferred upon a woman, and conferred not for notable achievements in the fields of law, letters or science, but for a wide service to the human race.

In conferring the degree upon Miss Schuyler, President Butler said:

Louisa Lee Schuyler: A pioneer in the service of noble women to the state; founder of the State Charities Aid Association and of the system of visitation of state institutions by volunteer committees of citizens; originator of the first American Training School for Nurses; initiating and successfully advocating legislation for the state care of the insane; powerfully aiding the first public movement for the prevention of blindness in little children; worthy representative of a splendid line of ancestors, distinguished through two centuries for manifold services to city, state and nation; great granddaughter of General Philip Schuyler of the American Revolution, great granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton of the class of 1777, I gladly admit you to the degree of Doctor of Laws.

It was eminently fitting that when convening in San Francisco our three national organizations representing over 30,000 professional nurses should have sent a message of congratulation to Miss Schuyler. The telegram read as follows:

The American Nurses Association, The National League of Education and the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, assembled at the Greek theatre of California send greetings of veneration, gratitude and congratulation to their friend, the originator of the first school for nurses in America, and whose life of service has been so deservedly recognized by Columbia University.

No careful student of the history of nursing in this country can fail to appreciate the debt that this profession owes to this far-sighted philanthropist and economist. A very superficial study of her life reveals the fact that the success of her reforms lies not only in her wide grasp of a situation or in her unusual organizing ability, but in the thoroughness with which she attacks each problem and in its most minute detail. It was not sufficient for her to conceive that intelligent women under instruction would render a more efficient service to the sick in



Louise Lee Schnepf L. L. D.
Columbia - 1915 -

Bellevue than was being rendered by the ignorant untrained women then caring for them; existing systems must be studied in this and other countries in order that the nursing system at Bellevue be established on the soundest and most enduring foundation. With such a conception of the methods of sound construction it was not strange that an almost immediate connection was made with the most advanced thinker of the day concerning the nursing care of the sick, and that the Nightingale system of nursing education should have been so early transported to this country.

Courses for nurses, and even so-called schools of nursing, had undoubtedly come into existence in this country before Miss Schuyler conceived of the establishment of a School at Bellevue to be organized on the lines of Miss Nightingale's School at St. Thomas' Hospital, London, opened in 1860. But the opening of the Nightingale School marked an era in the nursing care of the sick and laid the cornerstone of a new profession.

"For," to quote from the *History of Nursing*, "now was established a set of principles distinctly new or of new application to nursing orders. Most significant and radical was the recognition of science as the supreme authority in the education of the nurse . . . the mother school, (St. Thomas') the first one at once secular, non-sectarian, soundly organized, adequate in its hospital facilities and based on teaching. The head nurses were paid by the Nightingale Fund for teaching the probationers, the matron was paid for superintending them, and the medical instructor for his services in lecturing to them."¹

Dr. Gill Wylie, of New York, when reporting the result of his investigations of the schools of nursing in England mentioned as proof of the efficiency of the Nightingale School the fact that during the twelve years of its existence nurses had been sent as superintendents, matrons and training nurses in hospitals to all parts of England and her colonies.² The Hospital Committee of the New York State Charities Aid Association not only accepted almost in its entirety the Nightingale system—the trained superintendent of nurses to whom the pupils were directly responsible, the paid staff of qualified lecturers and instructors, the separate residence—but the reports to the Association of Mrs. Joseph Hobson and of Miss Abby Woolsey, both members of the Hospital Committee, with almost prophetic vision of the important part the nurse was to play in the great social movement of the twentieth century, emphasized again and again the necessity of a sound and com-

¹ *History of Nursing*, vol. 2, p. 181, 184.

² *State Charities Aid Association*, No. 1; *Report of Committee on Hospitals*, p. 6.

prehensive education, following closely the lines laid down by other professional schools and colleges.

"It should not," says Mrs. Hobson, "be regarded merely in the light of a work of benevolence but as a system of education calculated to benefit thousands in all ranks of life. . . . To such women (women of education) we are prepared to offer a career of the widest usefulness; a profession acquired under masters of the highest skill—physicians and surgeons of not only American but of European fame—and an assured means of livelihood. As the work advances we hope to establish a college for the training of nurses, which will receive a charter from the state and become a recognized institution of the country."³

Says Miss Abby Woolsey:

"Schools should not compete with each other on the basis of numbers or high wages but on that of the quality of nurses they turn out; and the best pupils are sure to value instruction more when they are not paid for acquiring it. . . . It is a question whether a nursing-school, after it begins to see returns for its original outlay, should class itself with charities. If money appeals to the public must be made, why should they not be made on the higher ground that colleges take? Why should there not be endowed tutorships and free scholarships for nurses in Bellevue and Baltimore?"⁴

Appreciative indeed Miss Schuyler must have been of the recognition of her services to society by Columbia University, but those who have the privilege of knowing her realize that her deepest satisfaction lies in the evidence that a great University has recognized, not for herself alone but for all social workers, that theirs is a service to humanity to be ranked with the achievements of scholars and educators. Rarely is it given anyone to see such definite and far-reaching benefits as the result of her efforts as this remarkable woman, now in her seventy-ninth year, has witnessed; the care of all the dependent insane of New York State in her great state institutions with their humane and orderly system as contrasted with the neglect and wretchedness of these unfortunates in the county poor-houses; the state-wide campaign of the State Charities Aid Association, founded by her, for the prevention of tuberculosis; the school of mid-wifery at Bellevue, the first in this country, the direct and almost immediate result of the work of the Committee for the Prevention of Blindness which she organized; the Bellevue of today with all of its numerous and orderly departments staffed not only by pupils from its own large school but from forty-three affiliating schools representing many states, its group of highly trained instructors and supervisors, its beautiful nurses' residence providing unusual

³ State Charities Aid Association, No. 1; Report of Committee on Hospitals, p. 6.

⁴ State Charities Aid Association, No. 11; *A Century of Nursing*, pp. 130, 131.

teaching facilities through its finely equipped lecture and demonstration rooms and laboratories, as contrasted with the Bellevue that grudgingly gave six wards for the practice field of the school Miss Schuyler sought to establish and that protested against the placing of nurses in the maternity wards and operating room.⁵

A significant incident in this connection is the fact that on the day Miss Schuyler received her degree from Columbia, less than fifty years after her initiation of the Bellevue Training School, degrees were conferred by Columbia University upon twelve nurses, graduates of the Teachers College who were to go out as teachers and administrators in schools of nursing and to supervisory positions in the public health field, thus fulfilling in a wider way than ever Miss Schuyler perhaps dreamed of, the underlying purpose of her plan—the provision for the most needy members of the community, when ill, of the most efficient and scientific care.

ASEPTIC FEVER NURSING

By D. L. RICHARDSON, M.D.

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Nursing of the sick is of ancient origin. In past centuries it has been performed by women with the highest motives, for the most part, but with crudest knowledge of disease. There was no real training and, if there had been, little could have been expected of such women when the exact knowledge of disease was so much more philosophical than scientific. It is not pleasant to realize that the earliest professional nurses were neither moral nor efficient, that nursing was looked upon as a disgraceful calling, and that women of character refrained from undertaking it. The results achieved by a few high-minded women during the Crimean War were, it may be truly said, the origin of modern nursing. Since that time, it has been put upon the highest moral and scientific basis. Within recent years, indeed, nursing knowledge and nursing methods have so far developed that it is no longer sufficient that a woman be known as a nurse, but it is asked of her in what kind of nursing she is most proficient. This specialization has followed much the same course as has been observed in the specialization of medicine, though there will always remain the general nurse, just as always the general practitioner.

The object of this paper is to point out a new field of nursing; namely, the care of infectious diseases, long known in England as "fever nursing."

⁵ *Recollections of a Happy Life*, pp. 91, 103.